The Laboratory for Extended Media at the University of Victoria exists within the Faculty of Fine Arts, and arose when the Faculty received a grant from Sun computers to equip its new Fine Arts building, which now contains a computer laboratory and a classroom designed for research and teaching. The Laboratory for Extended Media is a collection of facilities available to faculty and students in all five Fine Arts departments: Music, Visual Arts, History in Art, Creative Writing, and Theatre. The main facility contains 18 SPARC stations, eight Macintosh computers, and additional hardware and software to support image and sound manipulation. In addition, there are two computer music studios, located in another building, which are based on the Macintosh platform (Digidesign's SoundTools and Max, etc.) and on the NeXT workstation (equipped with IRCAM's ISPW board and Ariel's ProPort, Jaffe's Music Kit and assorted software) primarily.

The intent of the LEM is to attract students and faculty from all five disciplines, and also from engineering. In order to celebrate its beginnings, the LEM sponsored an international symposium involving arts and technology in January and February 1993, entitled Image-Sound-Text. The symposium was highly interdisciplinary, bringing together engineering, computer science, mathematics, cognitive psychology, music, visual art, literature, and other areas. The guest for the symposium were as follows:

Marvin Minsky, Artificial Intelligence and cognition, Jarom Lanier, Virtual Reality and visual programming languages, William Gibson, writer, Vibeke Sorensen, computer graphics and animation, Rand Steiger, composer, Ami Radunskaya, mathematics and chaos theory, and Tony Brown, kinetic sculptor. In addition, Max Mathews gave a lecture/demonstration with soprano Maureen Chowning, followed by a
concert featuring the Radio Drum, with new works by guest composer/performers Richard Bonnanger, David Jaffe, Mari Kimura, Ani Radunskaya and Andrew Schless. (Contact the author for information about receiving copies of video or audio coverage of these events).

In addition to the above pursuits, we hope to perform research and development in areas of electronic cultural exchange. The goal of the facility is the establishment of a world-wide network of educational institutions, galleries, and museums that would have the ability to share images, sound and text over existing physical networks. We envision a distributed electronic gallery that would be accessed through workstations at any point on the network. Each participating institution would maintain its own "database server" through which it could emphasize the strengths of its collection. Through the electronic gallery, an institution's collection could be experienced quickly, economically and globally via computer. The British Columbia Provincial Archives, and, in the near future, the Royal British Columbia museum will be using our system for several purposes including image databasing, object management, facilitating public access to their information and eventually remote public access.

We are interested in the collection and dissemination of media that reflect artistic and cultural work in which we have expertise, and/or which has a connection to this region. For example, we have been digitizing hundreds of images from indigenous art on Vancouver Island, in many cases with the collaboration of the native artists; we are also trying to involve the artists in the project in as many ways as possible. Along with the creation of new work, global communication and exchange of regional culture via high-bandwidth networks is the goal here.